

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.\*

It is scarcely necessary to employ the writings of other Authors as a text for any speculations on this fertile topic, but as we shall take a very different view of the age in which we live from that which has been rendered familiar and almost nauseating by the constant repetition of loose eulogies, we have deemed it prudent to inaugurate our remarks by reference to the essays of Authors, who, if they do not altogether accord with our opinions, are nevertheless as far as ourselves from assenting to the habitual laudations of the Nineteenth century which form the chief characteristic of this golden age.

The first of the little works mentioned below, that by M. Alletz, is an unpretending *résumé* of the intellectual achievements of the Century which is now flowing by. It is introduced, like so many other specimens of our modern literature, by a needless review of the intellectual culture of humanity from the earliest ages of the world; it is accompanied by occasional remarks on the strength and weakness of the times, and by passing suggestions on their wants and necessities; and it is concluded by some anticipations with regard to the probable characteristics of our future literature and science. If it did not suggest a contrast, which M. Alletz is far from challenging, and a comparison which he certainly never entertained, we would say that it is an attempt in an humble way to render the same service to the intellectual phenomena of the Nineteenth Century, which was rendered with such unrivalled ability by Lord Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* to those of the Seventeenth. The same object is contemplated in both works—to illustrate at once the capacities, the triumphs, and the defects of contemporary knowledge, and to indicate the road to new intellectual achievements. The difference of the respective ages, and the difference of the men, occasion of course an entire diversity of treatment. M. Alletz dwells at greater length and with a just pride upon the glory than on the weakness of the times;

and his censure of deficiencies, as his suggestions for improvement, are naturally uttered in a more subdued and timid tone than was consonant with the genius, or compatible with the aims of his predecessor. But though the work of M. Alletz can lay claim to no very eminent pretensions, his brief notices of scientific and literary progress are perspicuous, accurate, and consequently useful for immediate reference; and the original reflections, dispersed through his little volume, are worthy of all attention, being usually valuable and often striking.

The work of M. Chasles is a most heterogeneous *mélange*. It contains a little of nearly every thing from a fairy tale to a philosophical essay. It is a loose gathering from the contents of an over-stuffed portfolio—a repertory of dissimilar scraps and sketches:—yet all of them are calculated to reflect more or less light on the subject which has given name to the volume. The intellectual powers of M. Chasles are of a much higher order and larger calibre than those of M. Alletz. Everywhere he displays vivacity, strength, originality, and not unfrequently eccentricity also. He has studied deeply, and under all its shifting phases, the day in which he lives. He has estimated its weakness, and appreciated the causes of its imbecility: he has fathomed its boasts, and detected their emptiness and vain-glory: and he has to some extent apprehended the connection between its imminent perils and the elements of its supposed strength. There is perhaps a morbid asperity in his judgments, and a reluctance or incapacity to include the sunshine as well as the shade in his field of view; but his censure is just, though it may exclude the more favourable lights of the picture, and it is really refreshing to hearken to well-founded, though unmitigated, blame, when our ears have been so long stunned by indiscreet and indiscriminating praise.

We shall take neither M. Alletz nor M. Chasles as our guide, or as our authority in the remarks which we are about to make—we employ their works merely as a text on which to hang our sermon. We have not cited these authors as witnesses to be interrogated in Court, nor for the purpose of reading their testimony in confirmation of our positions; but have summoned them simply as friends to whom reference may be made by others, if any dissatisfaction is occasioned by the severity of our judgments. Leaving them, then, with this slight introduction to

\* GENIE DU DIX-NEUVIEME SIECLE, OU ESQUISSE DES PROGRES DE L'ESPRIT HUMAIN, DEPUIS 1800 JUSQU' A NOS JOURS. Par Edouard Alletz. Paulin. Editeur 1842—3. 1 vol. 12 mo.

ETUDES SUR LES HOMMES ET LES MOEURS AU XIX. SIECLE. PORTRAITS CONTEMPORAINS, SCENES DE VOYAGE, SOUVENIRS DE JEUNESSE Par M. Philartète Chasles, Professeur au Collège de France. Paris. Amyot. [1850.] 1 vol. 12 mo.

our readers, we proceed to discuss the important subject which has arrested our attention no less than theirs. Our notice must of course be cursory, and confined to broad and general characteristics, for, without venturing to repeat the accustomed hyperbole of declaring that the subject is endless, we may safely say that it is too ample, too varied, and too suggestive to permit anything like minute treatment within the compass of a Magazine essay. If we were to attempt a tolerably complete portraiture of the age, we should be compelled to commence like M. Alletz, with a classification of the different departments of practice and knowledge, which have been created by the exercise of the human faculties; and, whether we adopted the scanty and insufficient table of that gentleman, or the more extended and complete, though grotesque, scheme of M. Ampère, we should find in the examination of the numerous branches, material enough to fill volumes instead of pages, and yet neither exhaust, nor do full justice to the subject. We content ourselves, therefore with that more rapid, if less satisfactory, method of procedure, which will enable us to compress our observations within such limits as will not fatigue even the listless attention of a lazy reader.

In portraying the characteristics of the Nineteenth Century, there is one side of the picture on which we deem it wholly unnecessary for us to dwell at this time. Every one can enumerate and magnify for himself, or has heard unceasingly enumerated and magnified by others, the mechanical glories and the material distinctions of the age; and, while we neither deny nor under-rate these, we are not disposed to occupy our time with the repetition of praises incessantly repeated before, when much is to be learnt from confining our attention to those unfavorable symptoms, which are usually treated either as non-existent, or as scarcely meriting consideration in any general picture of the times. We will leave it to the Great Industrial Exhibition to proclaim the glories of cotton and iron manufactures and machinery—and will examine whether other and higher elements of social and individual greatness have not been sacrificed or impaired in attaining this dearly-bought excellence in things material and mechanical. Let it be distinctly understood, however, that we decry no form of excellence; that we entertain the highest admiration of the useful arts, and earnest anticipations of their further development; that we undervalue none of their triumphs, nor willingly overlook any of the multifarious ways in which they may be made to minister to the increase of human happiness, and the larger satisfaction of human wants. All that we object to is that the pursuit of material improvements for the sake of

individual gain, has become so nearly the exclusive and absorbing passion of the civilized communities of the earth, that it renders necessary the restoration of a healthier equilibrium between the satisfaction of man's material and his spiritual necessities. And all that we now propose to do is to take such a survey of the moral and intellectual condition of the times as may save us from being too easily beguiled by the syren song of unqualified praise which is the pæan of the Century, and may enable us to determine in what modes and to what extent the higher aims of humanity have been injured or neutralized by the incessant pursuit of inferior good.

On a rigid scrutiny of the times, we shall find, that, to whatever department of human speculation or practice we direct our attention, the principles on which such practice or speculation is conducted, are exceedingly vague and unsettled, and in need of instant and thorough revision. We are fully aware that this bold declaration, which we make at the outset, is directly antagonistical to the current assertions of holiday orators, to the self-complacent vanity of superficial convictions, and to the habitual arrogance of the self-belauding Nineteenth Century; but it is fully confirmed by the actual condition of the times. The world has suffered itself to be dazzled and misled by the multiplicity of brilliant details which daily demand its attention. The results of modern science have been numerous, curious, and of immediate practical application to the common purposes of life;—but, like the golden apples of Hippomanes, they have withdrawn our attention from the race set before us, so that we have forgotten the true goal, and have wandered, without our cognizance, out of the true path. While referring so habitually to the teachings of Bacon, as promulgating the maxims by which our science is governed, it is singular, or, at any rate, it is disgraceful, that we should so far have neglected both the spirit of his philosophy and the constant tenor of his advice, as to have mistaken the pecuniary fruits of science for valid indications of the healthy condition of the tree from which they spring. His warnings against this delusion are continual, and couched in the strongest terms: “for,” says he, “there is not any one art or science, which constantly perseveres in a true and lawful course, till it come to the proposed end or mark, but ever and anon makes steps after good beginnings, leaves the race, and turns aside to profit and commodity, like Atalanta.

“Declinat cursus, aurumque volubile tollit.”

This occurs in his *Essays on the Wisdom of the Ancients*; but the same doctrine is continually repeated and urgently enforced in all his principal

writings. In the Treatise *De Augmentis Scientiarum* he says: "Atque illud semper in animo tenendum, quod perpetuo inculcamus, experimenta lucifera etiam adhuc magis quam fructifera ambienda esse;" Again in the Preface to the *Novum Organon*: "Postremo omnes in universum monitos volumus, ut scientiæ veros fines cogitent; nec eam aut animi caussa petant, aut ad contentionem, aut ut alios despiciant, aut ad commodum, aut ad famam, aut ad potentiam, aut hujusmodi inferiora, sed ad meritum et usus vitæ, eamque in charitaté perficiant et regant?"

We might also quote numerous passages to the same effect from the *Novum Organon* itself,\* from the advancement of Learning, and the other works of Lord Bacon, but the repetition is needless, as this doctrine, (however it has been overlooked and neglected,) is almost the corner-stone, as it certainly is the strength of the true Baconian Philosophy, as contradistinguished from the mutilated travesty of it which passes current by that venerated name. True it is, that this is a corner-stone which the builders of modern science have too habitually rejected in the construction of their edifice, but at length they are beginning to pay the penalty of such systematic and infatuated rejection.

Estimated by their immediate and material results, the arts and sciences were probably never in a more flourishing or brilliant condition than they are at present. They subserve all the purposes of Aladdin's lamp; and have proved the magic instruments of the wonderful development of our material resources. The augmentation of wealth by their aid, and its rapid diffusion through all the viaducts of national production, have been such as might have amazed even the wildest credulity. We may well speak in terms of high laudation of the present intellectual condition of the world, and deem that a boundless heritage of good is before us, if we are content to judge of intellectual achievements by the beggarly and false canon of a monetary scale, and to estimate science with the spirit of Mammon. If man was designed to be a mere money-making machine, then great is Diana of the Ephesians, and greatest of all her worshippers is Demetrius, the silversmith. But if human destiny points to other aims the Nineteenth Century must be judged by other standards. All may be gilding and glitter without, but when we look more closely, and with less sordid vision at the condition of the world, what is the fruit of the aggregate operation of all our arts and sciences,

and systems, and intellectual schemes? What is the harvest which we have reaped from our alleged intellectual greatness in Religion, in Morals, in Politics, in Society, and in Private Life?

Growing discords and dissensions in Religion:—the abandonment of old doctrines and the substitution of new ones in accordance with the dictates of a vague, unreasoning fantasy:—a fretful restlessness and a feverish lust of change: understanding subordinated to inconsiderate zeal, and the meek performance of duty exchanged for an ignorant and verbose faith—a general indifference to every thing but the lifeless shell of the various creeds—the soulless formulæ which do not so much serve to embody truth as they suffice for a mystic incantation by which to recognize the initiated:—the severance of religious prescription from any controlling influence over our ordinary avocations:†—the impotence of such Christianity as is current in the world to check the unholy lust of gold, or to direct to ends sincerely, not ostentatiously, charitable the employment of our means;—its utter isolation from all practical authority over our relations to our neighbours in life;—and its almost meaningless restriction to ascetic, splenetic, individual, dreams and fancies. We greedily grasp at the rewards which religion offers in the promise of heaven, and we enter into the service of God with the same spirit with which we seek the mines of California. We avail ourselves eagerly of the threatened condemnations of the wicked, in order to assign them to our adversaries, and thus pour, in no scriptural sense, coals of fire on the heads of our enemies. We liken the Courts of heaven to a Bankrupt Court on earth, and recur to both with scarcely dissimilar hopes, when our own efforts or follies have threatened us with temporal ruin. These things, and things like these, comprise nearly the whole extent of the power of Christianity over the mass of our modern societies, and, with the blind recognition of some inherited or accidentally acquired ritual, constitute the body and soul of our religion. Whither have fled those strong bonds of sympathy, charity, and mutual attraction, by which it was to unite all the sheep of one shepherd into one fold? What weight do we attach to its denunciations against avarice? or what significance

\* "Formularia," says Leibnitz, "sunt quædam umbræ veritatis, ac plus minusve ad puram mentis lucem accedunt. \* \* Sed pluries contingit ut devotio ritibus suffocetur, lumenque divinum humanis obscuratur opinionibus." *Præf. Theod. Leibnitzii Opera. Ed. Duteris. Tom. i, p. 36.*

† We may look back with regret to a time, when as Livy said of the earlier ages of Rome, "*nondum hæc, quæ nunc tenet sæculum, negligentia Deum venerat; nec interpretando sibi quisque jusjurandum et leges aptas faciebat, sed potius suos mores ad ea adcommodabat.*"

\* The above quotations are from *Wisd. Anc. xxv. Atlantæ or Gain. Præf. Nov. Org. vol. ix, p. 161. De Aug. Sci. lib. v, c. ii, vol. viii, p. 276. Ed. B. Montagu: to which add Nov. Org. lib. i, Aph. lxx, xcix, cxxiv, cxxix.*

do we practically recognize in the solemn declaration that we cannot serve two masters—God and Mammon?

When the ordinary apprehensions of men, religious in their professions and self-estimation, attach so little real importance to religion, it is not to be wondered at that the spirit of the age should be marked by wide-spreading infidelity; nor that the arrogance of Science and Philosophy should endeavour to reconcile the popular practice with the conclusions of reason, by explaining away the divine nature and supernatural significance of Christianity, as has been done by Strauss and the German Rationalists; or by overwhelming, after the fashion of Hippo and Epicurus, all divine agency under the play of phenomena, and the functions of secondary laws, as has been attempted by Comte. The human mind yearns for obedience to the supremacy of a law: the heart of man pines for submission to the authority of a God:—these are necessities of our nature:—and the law will be recognized, and the God adored, although, through our blindness, we fancy the dream of a severed imagination to be the one, and discover the other in the calf made with our own hands. But, when the aspect of religion in the world is such as has been represented;—oscillating as it is through all the shades and degrees of infidelity, indifference, mysticism, ignorant zeal, adhesive credulity, and ascetic formalism;—assuredly it is as bad as the blind boasting of their sight, when we lend our voices to swell the noisy chorus of those who laud and magnify the intellectual glories of the present time.

Does the world fare better in point of Morals than it does in respect of Religion? Is the age of implicitly believed Illuminism entitled to all its own praises on the score of its sublimated morality? When our Religion is so impotent and inoperative in regulating and determining the procedure of our daily actions, it could hardly be anticipated that men would yield a permanent obedience to the feeble dictates of the unsanctified conscience. It is true that the distinction has been widely drawn even by Christian philosophers between Religion and Moral Prudence, and between religious practice and moral propriety of conduct. It is a distinction which we are reluctant to admit; for we think that, if permitted to be drawn, it concedes the argument to all the infidel casuists, and that it has tended more than any thing else to ostracize Religion from the ordinary avocations of life. It is reverting in principle, if not in terms, to the difference conceived by Sulpicius and Varro between the religion appropriate to the philosophers and that which is requisite for the vulgar. Moreover, even in the hands of those who have established

the distinction, it has left morals a purely negative virtue, comprising little more than abstinence from those open vices and flagrant crimes which are punished by the secular laws. But, conceding the distinction, what is the moral condition of this enlightened and purified generation? We may be referred to Penitentiary Reports and Statistical returns, which furnish only the anatomy of crime, inasmuch as it may be a violation of the municipal law:—yet even they bear but feeble testimony to the supposed excellence of the age. But when we look more carefully into the phenomena of the civilized world around us, do we find that any obligation is habitually regarded as sacred in private practice; or is any duty habitually enforced by the strong coercion of public sentiment, or the stronger influence of the conscientious observance of the right? There is none. The ideas of obligation and duty have given place to considerations of gain and expediency: immutable right and unchangeable wrong are measured and tested by the surplus or deficit of their aggregate money returns. Our lives are guided over the vast ocean of existence, without compass and without rudder, at the mercy of the shifting gales of interest, passion and caprice: impulse has usurped the functions of principle, and calculation is substituted for conscience. Rare indeed are those who are actually governed by the noble maxim: *Fais ce que dois, advienne que pourra*.\* Not merely our systems of Moral Science but still more our ordinary practises, are desecrated by beggarly notions of Benthamite expediency. Both are controlled by the wretched fallacy of the greatest happiness-principle, which, transferred from the Benthamite Cabala into what Touchstone calls 'the vulgar,' means not the truest happiness of the greatest number, but the immediate gratification of the most important number—Number One. Thus all action is introverted, and turned from the contemplation of duty and of God to the isolating, debasing, corrupting consideration of self. The bonds of society are thus rotted and broken asunder; communities are no longer held together by the latent, because deep-seated ties of dutiful correlation among its members: they exist by the mere force of outward pressure, by temporary interest, or by the pure apathy to every thing but money, which prevents their internal disorganization from producing actual severance. Of those great principles of duty, which are the foundations of all domestic, individual and public morals—family rights and obligations—which one has not been publicly scorned and is not habitually disregarded? The reverential obedience of children to parents is a dim recollection of a less enlightened age:—the sanctity of the mar-

\*Mde. De Staël. De l'Allemagne. Ptie. iii, chap. xiii.

riage tie is obliterated in the advocacy of the freedom of divorce, and the assertion of the chimerical rights of woman. Respect for age, and veneration for the dead promise no returns for our outlays, and are therefore cashiered as sentiments unworthy of our intellectual advancement. These cankers of our domestic tranquillity have eaten their way into the very heart of society, which is thus left without the regulating influences of the vital principle within:—without the moral restraint of unquestioned obligations:—and is wholly given up to the fluctuating and factitious guidance of transient expediences. How the hollowness and corruption of our age are illustrated by the demoralization of the vicious eras which have preceded it! The pages of Aristophanes and Thucydides, of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, portray the rottenness of our present social system as clearly and not less truthfully than the philosophic expositions of Comte, or the wild declamations of Carlyle.

When private morals are so loose and unstable, whence should we expect any fertilizing dew to descend upon public virtues? All our political organization is effete and corrupt: Cabinets held together by the private interests or the peculation of their members:—governments sustaining themselves by plunder and systematized bribery:—parties united by the greed of appropriating the spoils of office, and warring with each other for their profession:—catchwords usurping the place of principles of statesmanlike policy:—public men staking the interests of their country, often even of humanity, with their consciences and votes, on the hazard of a die, which is more important as settling their own temporal prospects, or as deciding the loss or gain of a bet, than as determining the procedure of great nations, or as affecting the welfare or misery of a large portion of mankind. Such are the phenomena of politics here and in Europe: and to this depravity of the leaders is united the uncertainty of nearly every rule of law and of every maxim of political wisdom. Everywhere the highest and most permanent interests of the human species are shuffled about and ultimately sacrificed to the diabolical rivalries of personal avarice. As if any thing were wanting to complete the confusion of this moral chaos a specious but deceptive Philanthropy steps in with sanctimonious uction, glorifies its own silly and ineffectual labours, and proclaims the wreck to be the glory of advancing civilization achieved by the mighty intellect of the Nineteenth Century.

We regret that we have not room to quote the strong and accurate censures of M. Comte on the Moral and Political condition of the present age; but his remarks are too diffuse and too

widely scattered for us to introduce them here.\*

When we pass from the more limited spheres of private and public morals into the great world of social organization, the diseases of the times are not indeed more aggravated, but they are more alarming from the extent and constant energy of their ravages. We have so diligently pursued the acquisition of gain, so audaciously renounced all restraints in the indulgence of our passion, that we have rendered scientific, systematical, and almost mechanical the means of its attainment. Our individual life is swallowed up in our business avocations:—the lust of gold is the main-spring of our actions, the constant attractive influence which determines the orbit of our course, and effectually has it moved and regulated the whole machinery of society. Every channel of human employment has been converted into an avenue for gain: productive industry produces nothing but material profits, until all the streams, which course through the community, like the fabled Lydian Pactolus, roll down their sands of gold. But what has been the result of thus simplifying and systematizing all existence into a continual hunt for money? Midas had ever the ears of an ass: and he shows them here. The different classes are arrayed against each other: the rich dread and scorn the power of the masses; yet, with hypocritical assiduity they flatter and fawn upon them, and with ill-disguised apprehension throw a Lethæan cake to Cerberus that he may hide his white and angry teeth. The multitudes envy, hate, and menace the wealthy:—they threaten agrarianism or the less sweeping remedies of violence and fraud:—for they feel that inherent discrepancy has grown into bitter hostility and inexplicable wrong; they see that there is war in the bosom of society, however it may be veiled, and that either they or their adversaries must die. There is physical force on the one side: there are capital, combination, and intelligence on the other:—if we should not rather consider Intelligence as the idle spectator of the fight, afraid to take part in the great contention from ignorance of the result, from want of genuine sympathy with either of the antagonists, or from conscious inability to influence the descent of the trembling scales. Thus power—means—knowledge are all divorced: and through all grades of the community we can trace the intense disorganizing agency of the common love of gold; we can see how all ties, and all bonds of allegiance, of faith, of duty, of affection, of observance of right, of respect for authority and law, have been dissolved in the great alembic by the corrosion of that universal solvent. The curse of Esau is upon our

\* See Comte. Cours de Phil. Pos., tome iv, p. 130. et seq.

modern social organization ; each man's hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him. This consuming greed has introduced first discord and then murder into the sacred circle of the family : \* nowhere is there a refuge or escape from its influence or its crimes. With this fearful struggle convulsing society to its centre, the increase of pecuniary gains is only the increase of our difficulties and miseries. If man cannot live by bread alone, much less can he live by gold alone. The fate of Tantalus has come upon us :—*mediis sitiemus in undis*, we are dying from thirst in the midst of the waters of abundance. The fruits of our labour, which hang so temptingly before our eyes, elude our grasp ; for penury, misery, starvation, crime, ignorance, brutality, lawlessness among the masses, and irresponsible license with insatiable greed, among the rich, form the harvest which we reap from the augmentation of our gains, and are the social results of that immense accretion of wealth which we owe to the boasted Intellect of the age, and to the systematic application of Science to mechanic arts and manufactures. We deride the Alchemists who pored by day over their Abraxas or Abracadabra, and by night assiduously bent over the furnace in search of the philosopher's stone which was to turn all things to gold. But is not our own conduct analogous, though still more unwise ? By night we brood over the Day Book and Ledger to reckon up and chuckle over our past gains ; and to devise means for making each item of recorded profit the stepping stone to larger and ampler returns. By day, with incessant toil and undistracted aim, we endeavor to carry our greedy schemes into practice—barter health, happiness, serenity, duty, sympathy, the kindly charities of humanity—everything, in exchange for the accursed gold : and, after spending our existence in raking in new heaps to the accumulated and daily increasing store, we die clutching at the profitless and shadowy riches in pursuit of which we have squandered all that was valuable in life. But while the successful few are thus securing the golden returns of industry at the expense of all that elevates humanity, the millions are laboring and sweating in the vain effort to acquire clothing and bread—cursing the day on which they were born, and denying the God who hath ordered all things ; hating every man who has prospered, because fancying themselves the victims of his rapacity : turning their violent hands against their own families in order to buy sustenance with the price of domestic blood : embittered

against all existing institutions, because suffering co-incidentally with their existence. Thus one man multiplies his thousands yearly, while a thousand starve through life, getting neither a sufficient maintenance for their families, nor with all their labor able to profit by the increased productiveness of human ingenuity and scientific appliances : and hence has arisen a pervading and implacable hostility to all wealth, all property, all order, all law, all subordination, all reverence and respect for the wise and good. The progress of freedom and the “march of intellect” have abolished the distinction of classes almost entirely : our lust of a libertine freedom hardly tolerates even the recognition of any disparity between the upright and the base : we admit only two orders, the rich and the poor, the successful and the unfortunate. Dives and Lazarus divide between them, in very unequal proportions, and under the most antagonistical conditions, the civilized communities of the modern world. In the distribution of the fruits of the earth between these two contending parties, there is too much reason to believe that the complicated machinery of society does little more than throw, by ingenious and mysterious devices, all the grain to Dives and all the chaff to Lazarus.

It is hardly necessary to descend more particularly and specially into the characteristics of private life in this Nineteenth Century : they have been already indicated in our previous remarks, and may be easily inferred from the other phenomena of the times which we have mentioned. The most prominent and lamentable peculiarity to be noticed is doubtless the substitution of temporal gain for any higher aim as the goal of existence : the craving after pecuniary success in preference to, or in disregard of, the more legitimate and solemn objects of human life ; and the consequent reduction of our judgments and practices to the false and fatal standard of pecuniary profit and loss. The result has been that we have in a great measure obliterated the great distinction of right and wrong ; we have obscured our moral vision so that we do not correctly perceive the irreconcilable opposition between the just and the unjust, or, at any rate, so that we too frequently mistake the one for the other : kindly impulses have become almost the sole arbiters of propriety, and expediency the test of prudence, and by these dangerous monitors we suffer our actions to be determined. There is thus a constant fluctuation and inconsistency in our estimates of things ; we are left without any fixed standard by which to regulate our conduct, and are led into continual temptations, from which, if we escape, we escape rather by the blind favour of fortune than by the strong effort of confirmed principle. In all the relations of life the pernicious

\* See Bulwer's *Lucretia*, the main incidents of which are founded on fact, and amply verified by criminal records. See also *Annual Register*, 1847. *North British Review*, Jan. 1848.

cious influence of these tendencies may be discovered on close and sober examination. Human passions and human affections are, indeed, ineradicable, and must remain substantially the same, notwithstanding all the changes of the social atmosphere around them: nevertheless they are capable of wonderful elevation, and they have thus rendered illustrious some ages of the world by the abundance of heroic virtues; but they admit also of fearful contamination, and the infection by which they are poisoned may so disguise them that their fundamental identity at all times and under all circumstances can hardly be recognized. Thus, in the present day, the most intimate relations of domestic life, and the most private operations of human thought and feeling, have experienced a most unhealthy bias from the enervation of consistent principle, and the ascendancy of avaricious aims. Every now and then the sluggish current of our apparently prosaic life is broken by some startling incident of domestic vice: from time to time the latent, but ever active, evil manifests itself in open acts of terrible criminality, which amaze the tender consciences and disturb the hypocritical serenity of the public, who fail to recognize in the guilt which they so vociferously decry, the legitimate fruit of the seed which they have been sowing broadcast among the whole community, and the necessary consequence of the social and other influences under which it has attained its maturity.

A somewhat singular result has flowed from the unregulated licence of individual impulses which characterizes our modern condition. We constantly complain of the absence of all poetic influences from civilized life; we assert that the steam engine and the printing press, the cotton jenny and the electric telegraph, have banished the reign of sentiment, and definitely established in its place the orderly government of practical reason. We lament over, or we glory in this change, according as it has pleased the Gods to make us poetical or prosaic; but few ever seriously think of denying the asseveration. Yet assuredly there has never been an age in which the romance of real life has so abundantly confirmed the truth of the poet's saying that truth is stranger than fiction. Whether in the performance of good, or in the perpetration of evil, there has been no period in the history of humanity when the hard facts of common-place existence have been more signally contrasted with the wild eccentricities which furnish the material of poetry. There has been no half century since "the round globe was hung upon nothing," in which crime has clothed itself with deeper or more dazzling colors, and individual achievement manifested itself in ampler propor-

tions or a more heroic form. Even the recent years have not been behind the first lustrous of the century. Is not the Mexican war as strange and romantic as any tale of *faërie*? Are not the migration to California, and the wonders of that golden land as surprising as the fiction of the Argonauts? Was the Hungarian insurrection inferior to the glorious struggle of Tell and the Swiss patriots in any thing but success? Was the late Roman Triumvirate not as startling and as far from the path-way of prosaic facts as the rule of the Tribune Rienzi? Is the ascendancy of Louis Buonaparte in France, and his whole early career, not more like a dream than a reality? Is the story of Sir James Brooke, the English Rajah of Sarawak, less deeply interesting, or less romantic than that of Raymond Lully or of St. Francis Xavier? The Alchemists and the Astrologists of the Middle Ages are favorite subjects of poetry and art; is the capacity for such adaptation destroyed by the conversion of the chimerical hopes of Alchemy into the every-day triumphs of chemistry, and the realization of much at which the Astrologists aimed by strictly scientific methods? Science, indeed has its own romance: and poetry springs less from the subject and the external condition of the times, than from the feeling with which these are viewed. If the age was essentially and irretrievably unpoetic, it would be a singular anomaly, that M. Comte, the most practical and dogmatic philosopher of the times, should have endeavored to construct a social re-organization in which the vital atmosphere should be the larger diffusion and more sublimated expansion of the sentiments and affections. But the truth is that poetry is but the utterance of passion; and wherever any one passion, or any connected set of passions, are developed into unusual intensity, then and there poetic feeling will be found. Even the love of gold may have its poets, as it has had its unholy army of martyrs: and whether in the pursuit of the ruling passion, by fair means or foul; or in the noble disdain of the corroding and over-ruling tendencies of the age, strong passions will be generated, and high achievements performed, and from these will flow, just in proportion to the depth of the feeling, those strange incidents and romantic exploits which chequer so singularly the chess-board of the modern world.

But to render more accurate and precise this indication of an almost unnoted peculiarity in the nineteenth century, we may add that it is in the conflict of feeling between the acceptance and the rejection of an absorbing passion, and in the periods when this conflict takes place that the colors of poetry are most frequently displayed. Such we think to be the condition of the

present times. The indications are, indeed, both doubtful and liable to deceive; nevertheless, we will venture to declare our firm conviction that the tide of avarice is beginning to ebb, and is now just upon the turn. Certain we are that if, in this we should be mistaken, we may expect at no distant day an inglorious close to our modern civilization. Few, indeed, at first will be the numbers of those who will be able to resist the ruling tendency of the hour, and almost imperceptible their influence. The multitudes will long continue to yield to the momentum or to the *vis inertiae* which impels them in the line of previous progression. Still, we think that a new direction and from an adverse quarter has been communicated to the civilization of the age, and that the century will not wholly run out without affording unmistakeable evidences of a more healthy change. It is in this conflict between the old and the new,—between the submission to the degrading authority of the dominant power, and the gallant but uncertain aspiration after an undiscovered but better future that the eccentricities, the romances, and the high emprise of the age have been nurtured. The cause of the coming change, in which we believe, and to which we anxiously look forward, we would attribute to the frustration of the aims contemplated by the world, by the realization of those very objects which, in its short-sightedness, it has hitherto supposed to be the all-sufficient means of their satisfactory accomplishment, and which it still boasts as the proudest triumph of enlightened humanity. We need scarcely say that this frustration has been, up to this time, rather vaguely felt than cognizantly detected.

We have already seen that, through an exclusive devotion to one material agent of individual comfort and national well-being to which we have prostituted our governments, our morals, our religion and our lives—we have drawn a broad and almost indelible chasm between the few and the many—we have severed all classes from each other,—have arrayed every man against his neighbors, have attempted to co-ordinate communities on the fictitious basis of the neutral harmony of conflicting interests—have introduced discord and treachery into the sacred and narrow circle of family life—and have left the whole framework of society to decomposition and putrefaction, by extinguishing the vital principle of social existence, which can alone bind together communities in harmonious, tranquil and profitable union.

But we can point to the wonderful machines and other devices which human ingenuity has constructed; we can boast of the singular multiplication of productions which is due to their agency; we can pride ourselves on the immense

saving of labor by which these improvements have been attended; we can rejoice at once in the increased cheapness of products and in the daily augmenting rapidity with which capital is accumulated. All this is, indeed, true, but, though true, it is not necessarily nor of itself enough for the healthy condition of societies. Concomitant with these undeniable advances has been the equally undeniable extension of pauperism, and, worse perhaps than all, a growing disparity between the chances of success offered to perseverance with capital, and industry without. Let us even grant to some of the advocates of the present social system that the condition of the laboring poor is not worse than it was in previous centuries, certainly the schism between the rich and the poor is more rigidly constituted and more keenly felt than in any former age. The tendency of capital to breed capital, and the inability of more labor to do any thing but hide its talent, if it happens to possess one, in a napkin, till the day comes when even that is to be taken from it, was never more signally displayed than in the midst of our much vaunted civilization. The sudden multiplication of products by machinery has given a great impulse to all kinds of production, but it has also given a greater stimulus to the increase of population. The competition of famishing laborers has thrown large profits into the hands of the capitalist, but it has abridged the lives and the happiness of the human instruments of production, and has thrown nearly half of their numbers into the poor-house or a premature grave. The refuge which the Poor-houses, the Gaols, and the Penal Colonies—the Penitentiaries or the Benevolent Associations have offered to laziness and crime as well as to misfortune, have destroyed the sense of shame, have multiplied the candidates for admission, and have offered a premium for idleness, and for crime that comfortable shelter which is denied to industrious integrity. The mock philanthropy of the age too has stepped in to render, by its assiduous follies, the difference between crime and calamity still more undistinguishable. Under these circumstances criminals increase even faster than population, and pauperism threatens at no distant day to outstrip production. The puny sentimentalism of the day forbids the adoption of any adequate means to arrest this fatal tendency. The enlightened spirit of the nineteenth century forbids the infliction on the guilty of such penalties as might deter from the commission of guilt; and while it pushes poverty aside from its path, it devises ingenious and costly contrivances to proclaim that pauperism shall be rewarded. It pets and pampers the felon and the beggar, while it crushes beneath the ponderous wheels of its



ever active machinery the innocent and unfortunate, and the honest poverty which, even in the evil days of Juvenal, was praised while it starved, is now hungered to death without the cheap solace of a passing commendation.

But the prudent, money-making world is at length beginning to discover that crime may be costly, and that pauperism may be a tax infinitely more burthensome than even a national debt: and it is in consequence solicitous to discover some abatement for the fearful distresses and the terrible demoralization which its productive energy has occasioned. It discovers too late that it has so far relaxed the bands of authority that they cannot be tightened again. A very moderate attempt to do so has resulted in revolution throughout the whole of Europe, and the progress of anarchy has revealed the secret that not merely governments have lost their authority, but that the prestige has departed from all that was previously venerated and sacred amongst men. Archimedes would have moved the globe, if he could have found a fulcrum for his lever and a firm resting-place for his foot. He was unable to do so, and he was obliged to let the earth roll on as it had rolled before. Modern statesmen are met by exactly the same difficulty: they could regulate the nations, if their power could only be brought to act upon the multitudes to be controlled; but unable to find any magic which has not lost its influence, any principle which has not been divested of its sanctity, they are impotent to direct, to reform, or to govern. Greed on the one side, and hunger on the other have rendered both Dives and Lazarus deaf to any proposition which does not promise immediate gain or immediate bread.

Much has been said in praise of the nineteenth century in consequence of the efforts that have been made to diffuse education among all classes of society, and extend other improvements to the condition of the masses. What has been the result? Let the recent and even the present condition of Europe be the answer. Is socialism a consequence of the education of the poor, or has it sprung from the inefficacy of all means hitherto adopted to effect any salutary change in the nurseries of the multitude? We boast, too, of the increased and more accurate study of the wants and necessities of the poor, of parliamentary commissions and legislative deliberations to determine the nature of the remedies to be adopted. Are these things, and things like these fit matter for self-laudation or for shame? Are we entitled to credit in consequence of having entered upon such inquiries and such measures too late, when they have been forced upon our attention by the imminent peril of all property and all institutions, or should we not rather confess

our disgrace that we have blindly and ignorantly postponed so long the diligent consideration of matters which in every age ought to have attracted the regards of a society claiming to be enlightened? In the engrossing pursuit of gain, and the exclusive devotion of science to the improvement and multiplication of the machinery of profit, we have overlooked every thing else; and when the judgment has come upon us unawares, and we are compelled, as a measure of pecuniary expediency to educate the poor, to study the condition of the masses, and to detect the laws of social organization, we have acquired such an inveterate habit of regarding the Intellect of the Age as something almost superhuman, that we must boast even of these insufficient measures to redress the evils which we have been so laboriously fostering into their present magnitude.

Driven from position after position, the eulogist of the age, may still think himself secure of the assent of multitudes, when he rests his cause on the rapid and wide extension of "the area of freedom." Of such assent, under any circumstance, we have little doubt, whether the propositions assented to be or be not understood. But we are somewhat sceptical as to the degree of good attained by this inconsiderate expansion of liberty. As to the real progress of sober, rational, beneficial freedom, we are strongly disposed to deny the fact: and even if the fact be true, nations must be educated for republican government, or they are certain to abuse it. They must win their way to freedom by long effort and gradual advances, or they will be incompetent to enjoy it. At a time when every man claimed to be a Democrat from the hope of plunder, a Democratic friend remarked that it was not every man who said Lord! Lord! who should enter into the kingdom of heaven, nor every man who professed himself a Democrat who was entitled to an office. We require further proof of Democracy than the mere assertion of hot-headed enthusiasts, or the establishment of a Republic under the Presidency of a Buonaparte. Social anarchy and intemperate license have indeed professed and perhaps fancied themselves to be marching under the banners of Democracy, but they do not on that account establish a Democracy any more than they constitute freedom. They only disguise a bad cause under a hallowed name: and enlist votaries and admirers who applaud what, if they understood it, they would condemn. It would be a strange anomaly indeed if either individuals or nations should become patriots and democrats for bread: Hampden had some change in his purse when he refused to pay the ship-money: Tell was not starving when he struck for Switzerland: George

Washington, John Hancock and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, had no fear of rent-day when they decided for American independence. Political rebellion may be the harbinger of freedom: social insurrection can breed only disorder or despotism. The confusion of liberty with license has indeed become almost habitual, and the origin of this blending of opposite ideas is by no means of difficult detection. The let-alone theory of government has, by its application among a free people, placed under peculiar and favourable circumstances, been so signally successful in the augmentation of material results, that the merchants, manufacturers, and money-seekers throughout the world have insisted upon the adoption of the policy, and the discontented of all classes have supposed a connection which has no national existence between Democracy and the absence of government interference. The history of previous republics might have prevented the commission of this mistake. But the cry of the capitalists for the *Laissez faire* system, in order that their acquisition of gains might be unrestricted, has led to the supposition that the entire absence of political restraints was the Utopia of political organization, and the surest evidence of Democratic principles. Strange as it may seem the Socialists, the Communists, and the other instruments of Revolution in France, are precisely those who most loudly proclaim their desire to establish a concentrated and consolidated government, which shall constantly interfere in all the affairs of private life, and in all transactions of the highest or lowest kind which occur in the community. Yet this is to one set of admirers of the nineteenth century an indication of the progress of freedom, and to another the approaching triumph of the *Laissez faire* system.

There are thus two very different sides to the picture of the Nineteenth Century, and perhaps that which has been least regarded is worthy of the deepest consideration. When the summer is present we hardly dream of the coming change of the warm bright sunshine into the gloom of winter; and while complacently dwelling upon the glories of the present age we rarely think of the disasters which are imminent, and dream not of looking for the snake which coils itself beneath the flowers. Yet the future is more properly the field of human thought and speculation than the present; and even the present may reveal the fearful action of the corroding and disorganizing forces which threaten to engulf the future. These powers which will assume the ascendant, if they be not checked in their inception, are certainly entitled to closer scrutiny than the mere glitter of apparent successes; and their secret action assuredly tends to impress the cur-

rent age with the stamp of imbecility and evil, much more than its pecuniary triumphs characterize it with its alleged strength and splendour. The glory is at the surface, the canker in the heart: like silly and vain children we have been boasting of the beauty of our fruits, when feeding on deadly poison. Great may appear to be the scientific, mechanical, and intellectual achievements of the age—we are not disposed to deny them, though we think they have been much overrated:—but still greater are the follies into which they have seduced, and perilous indeed is the doom which they threaten. Society in utter anarchy and confusion; the government of States reduced to a mere scramble for office; the principles of politics and law alike unsettled; religion converted into a blind adherence to formulas which are not comprehended, or to an ingenious play of intellectual sophistry; and the whole code of morality supplanted by systems of individual expediency; surely, these are anomalous indications of an Age of Intellect, and if they constitute the glory of “the enlightened age in which we live,” they would have been deemed the shame and the condemnation of the darkest period in previous history.

It is important to trace social and intellectual evils to their source, and if we fail to discover the prime movers, or even to unveil the multiplicity of concomitant influences, all tending to the same end, we may arrive at those remote, if not ultimate, causes, which may enable us to discover the true point at which any adequate remedy must be applied. To those who are not conversant with the intimate connection of all parts of human history, and are unfamiliar with the phenomena of social change, it may seem surprising that the determining cause of social good or evil, should be usually found in departments of intellectual action apparently, or, at least, in popular estimation, entirely disconnected with the practical life, which is the subject of such change. We have already attributed to the excessive passion for gain which engrosses the modern world, the origin of that distempered state of religion, morals, politics, and society, which in our opinion, reflects more disgrace upon the age, than all its successes can claim glory. This may be called a proximate cause, and the connection between this influence and its results is sufficiently close to be perceived, even if their action in this particular way should be denied. But behind this lies another and much more general cause of present intellectual and social disorder, and one whose action is manifested in multifarious forms, and to a pervading extent which far surpasses the influence of any single special cause, which is itself but one of the consequences of the broader principle. We would

then refer our present lamentable condition to the misapprehension and misapplication of the Philosophy of Bacon—the dominant philosophy, in its perverted form, of the last two centuries—and to the other intellectual aberrations which have infected the whole body of recent times, and produced that revolutionary complexion, which has burst forth in Europe into active and fearful manifestation, but which exists no less in other countries which have given less direct indications of its agency. It would be easy to show, if space permitted it, that this revolutionary character of societies and governments is accompanied by like tendencies in Literature, Philosophy and Science:—and in fact all the evils and intricate difficulties of the present day have sprung from that intellectual anarchy, which has flowed from the misappreciation of Lord Bacon's philosophy, and from the licentious disregard of all authority, religious or moral, but that shadowy authority which is set up and thrown down *ad libitum*, according to the caprice of our own imaginations, or the whisper of our own passions. Even the Science, of which we boast so loudly and so long, is little more than the beggarly application to petty or practical details of the methods and principles established by an earlier and healthier generation;—and our Literature exhibits merely a vast arena for the ostentation of individual vanity and superficial loquacity. “In the youth of a State,” says Lord Bacon, “arms do flourish: in the middle age of a State, learning: and then both of them for a time together: in the declining age of a State, mechanical arts and merchandise.”

It is much to be feared that the civilized world has now come to that declining age, and boasts of the symptoms of decay, as stinking fish might boast of the splendour of those lambent fires which played upon the putrescent body. All our science has become mechanical, and all our literature marketable, while both flourish merely as a part of the general merchandise of the day, which engrosses all thoughts and all feelings, as being the constituted avenue for gain. Napoleon sneered at the English as a nation of shopkeepers: were he alive again, he might see a world of hucksters proud of their occupation, and deeming it a proof of the march of intellect, and an incontrovertible evidence of the enlightenment of the Nineteenth Century.

We end without having uttered a tithe of the reflections which are suggested by the subject, and leaving wholly unnoticed the numerous anomalies and gross inconsistencies which render the self laudation of the age supremely ridiculous to any thinking man. It is a subject to which we shall have frequent opportunities to return: and if proof of our positions be wanting,

it will only be necessary to review the history of the last ten years. For the present we know of only one single work which the boasted intelligence of the Nineteenth Century is competent to write in an entirely satisfactory manner: it is one satirically attributed by Dr. Donne to St. Bonaventura. “*De particula non a Decalogo adimenda, et symbolo Apostolorum adjicienda.*”

H.